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Article published Jun 29, 2006

Celebrating independence at Sterling State Park

Sterling State Park is the place to be Monday to watch the annual Independence Day Fireworks Show over Lake Erie co-sponsored by the Monroe County Convention & Tourism Bureau and four area businesses.

In its eighth year, the all-day event has been renamed the "River Raisin Independence Day Celebration."

Festivities will kick off at noon and will feature food and live entertainment all day leading up to the 30-minute display at dusk set off by the Colonial Fireworks Co. of Clayton.

The state park is the "perfect venue" for a Fourth of July holiday display, said John Patterson, president and chief executive officer of the CTB.

"If you have seen the fireworks over Lake Erie, you know what I mean. If you haven't, you don't want to miss this year's show," he said.

There are good viewing spots in the parking lots, but the best way to watch the fireworks may be from nearby Lake Erie. Mr. Patterson said last year he and Richard G. Micka counted an estimated 700 boats in the lake watching the display.

"Being out on the water is an incredible experience." Mr. Patterson said. "Last year, there were other displays going on (Downriver) and at Put-in-Bay."

For the first time, concessions will be available inside the park. Mathewson's Concessions of Carleton will have six trailers selling bratwurst, hamburgers, hot dogs, Italian sausage, french fries, cotton candy, elephant ears, funnel cakes and cold beverages. The firm is well known for selling food at the Monroe County Fair.

Live entertainment will begin at noon and include folk singer Kevin Daniels and the Erie Boys led by Matt Cousino on violin.

Admission to the park is \$6 a vehicle for Michigan residents and \$8 a vehicle for non-residents. Senior citizens can buy admission and annual passes to the park for \$6. The passes are good at any state park in Michigan.

Reservations at the park campground can be made by calling toll-free (800) 447-2757 or by stopping at the park office off N. Dixie Hwy. No reservations will be taken through the local park phone number.

The park also offers hiking trails, biking, swimming, bird watching and relaxing on the beach.

La-Z-Boy Incorporated, Monroe Bank & Trust, Monroe County Community Credit Union and The Monroe Publishing Co. are co-sponsoring the day's activities.

The fireworks show is produced in partnership with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Army Corps of Engineers, Frenchtown Township, Monroe County Sheriff's Office and the state park.

Rain date for the show is July 8.
